

My view on this is simple: We did not swear an oath to protect a procedural rule like the filibuster, which has been the tool of racial segregation and Jim Crow. No, we swore an oath to defend the Constitution. When the Senate rules stand in the way of voting rights legislation, then those Senate rules must change.

A year after an insurrection at our Nation's Capitol, we must do more than speak up about the importance of democracy. Now, we must act. It is time to end the filibuster, time to protect voting rights, and time to defend our democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, all the Republican members of the Senate Judiciary Committee sent Attorney General Garland two letters about the Justice Department's involvement in local school board matters.

The first one was in October. Then in December, we asked why the FBI's counterterrorism division was getting involved in parents' expressing their concerns at school board meetings.

Now, just to be crystal clear, there is no excuse for real threats or acts of violence at school board meetings, but if there is such threats, these should be handled at the local level, and the Attorney General should withdraw his memo that started this whole thing off.

Well, a couple days before Christmas, the Justice Department responded to us Republican members of the Judiciary Committee with a single-page letter. In that letter, the Department of Justice had nothing to say about why the FBI's counterterrorism division was involved in local school board matters. The Department of Justice just simply said "We're not going to withdraw the memo."

So the Feds may be keeping track of school board meetings, even if it creates a horrible chilling effect at those meetings and maybe even discourages people from coming to those meetings. And, of course, the FBI looking over your shoulder would then have a chilling effect.

Now, next week, the Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on domestic terrorism, and I hope the committee will be focusing on the serious threats facing our country, and I hope no one thinks the focus is going to be on our Nation's parents.

School boards have to be accountable to the parents and the taxpayers that they serve. Some school boards across the country are still shutting down classes, even though vaccines have been available for a long time and dramatically reduce the chances of major illness to teachers.

Meanwhile, millions of kids across the country are struggling to catch up. They are under enormous stress from being separated, one kid from their friends in the classroom or in the school building. Schools are seeing far

more behavioral problems than they ever have before.

Parents, then, are right to be concerned about these situations in their local schools, and it is their right to ask questions. They should be telling their school board districts that they want to see changes. But will they see changes or will they be afraid to speak up at school board meetings? Will the FBI's counterterrorism division be keeping track of them as parents ask for changes from their school boards?

The Department of Justice owes the American people a better answer than just a single-page letter that says nothing about why the FBI's counterterrorism division is involved in local school board matters.

Now, more than ever, parents should be their kids' strongest and their kids' best advocates. They have a God-given right to do so. And, of course, the Justice Department ought to be doing everything it can to protect that constitutional right, not scare these parents out of exercising their constitutional right.

Attorney General Garland should withdraw his memo, and he should take Congress' oversight and concerns for parental rights more seriously.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. President, on another matter and the last issue I am going to speak to, I want to visit with my colleagues on the continuing rise of violent crime across the country.

We have all heard about the unprecedented 30-percent spike in murders that began in the summer of 2020. It continues to this very day. Over a dozen cities set new homicide records in the year just passed.

The rise of violent crimes coincides with the defund the police movement and widespread de-policing. Cutting police budgets combined with an antipolice sentiment fostered by local elected officials has led to violence against our police officers, so we have seen a dramatic increase in on-duty deaths in the last year.

I want to quote the Fraternal Order of Police. That organization says that 63 officers were murdered and 346 officers were shot. This organization also reported ambush-style attacks on law enforcement officers spiked 115 percent from 2020. The FBI has reported that unprovoked attacks against officers in which the officers had no official contact with the offender prior to the attack "continued to outpace all circumstances of felonious officers' death."

Other forms of violent crime are also up, as police are forced to retreat from the streets, including carjackings. Chicago saw 1,646 carjackings, compared to 603 incidents in 2019. Minneapolis Police report that carjacking shot up by 537 percent. Carjackings in New Orleans have doubled since 2019. Oakland Police say carjackings increased by 85 percent. Washington, DC, reports a 141-percent increase from last year. In Louisville, KY, carjackings have in-

creased 185 percent. And similar reports come out of cities across the country.

So, you see, criminals are emboldened by what is going on in our country, either through not showing respect for law enforcement or from efforts to cut the budgets of police departments.

Flash mobs—another sort of new lingo that is just new because of the increase in crime—flash mobs have made large organized smash-and-grab robberies a way of life in many cities. You have seen this on television—break down the doors, go in with the hammers, steal everything you can, do it within 2 or 3 minutes, and get out of there. So in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Boston, Houston, Atlanta, Sacramento, Baltimore, Las Vegas, and Seattle, groups of dozens make off with hundreds of thousands in merchandise.

I requested a briefing from the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security on these organized retail crime groups.

This rise in violent crime ought to be unacceptable to everybody, and I am stepping up to find solutions to these issues.

This past December, Chairman DURBIN of the Judiciary Committee held a field hearing in Chicago concerning gun trafficking and violent crime. I submitted questions for witnesses concerning the crisis level of carjackings, the terrible attacks on police, like the murder of Chicago Police Officer Ella French, and failed policies in blue cities that allow violent crime to continue.

I hope the Judiciary Committee will hold a full committee hearing here in Washington on the spike in violence and the challenges that law enforcement is facing, including ineffective bail policies, the cumbersome restraint on police officers, and the impact of the progressive prosecutor movement. Every minority member of the committee, led by myself as ranking member, has written to the chairman to request that we do have this hearing. I look forward to working with him on setting that up.

I hope my colleagues will join me in looking for ways that we can do more to combat violent crime—from carjackings, to organized retail crime, to an unspeakable rise in murders and the murders of police officers. Let's have a hearing where we can learn more about these trends and how we can support police officers. Let's look for ways that we can strengthen Federal criminal laws and Agencies to fight this violent crime. We can't continue down this path or it is going to lead to vigilante law enforcement.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.